

SERMON

O N

SUBMISSION

T O

Divine Chastisements.

By SAMUEL SAVAGE.

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L O N D O N :

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SUBMISSION



BY SAMUEL SAVAGE

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TO THE
READER.

THE substance of this discourse was deliver'd in the common course of my preaching, some years since, without the least thought of making it thus publick; and if a transcript of it wou'd have satisfy'd the person, at whose desire it is now printed; it had still been confin'd to a narrow compass. The subject of it is practical, and of general concernment; and I confess that hath been an inducement to comply with my friend's request. I was desired to make some additions to those parts, which before had been spoken to only in general; and to this it is owing
A 2 that

TO the READER.

that I have exceeded the ordinary limits of a sermon. I suppose I need not make an apology for such alterations, as any one wou'd be inclin'd to make, when he is oblig'd to transcribe for the press. I hope this attempt hath already been useful to some, and if by being spread further, I shou'd find it makes suitable impressions upon others; it will afford me a pleasure, which I need not conceal, or disguise.

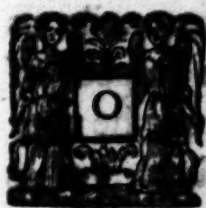
S. S.

Edmonton, Feb. 23, 17 $\frac{1}{2}$.



HEB. XII. 9, 10.

*Furthermore we have had fathers
of our flesh which corrected us,
and we gave them reverence;
shall we not much rather be in
subjection to the father of spirits,
and live? For they verily for a
few days chasten'd us, after their
own pleasure; but he for our
profit, that we might be partakers
of his holiness.*



OUR observation and experience,
without the assistance of any
other arguments, sufficiently
convince us that we are liable
to a great variety of afflictions. And since
the weight of them is greater, or less, ac-
cording to our degrees of present support,
and the future effects which we apprehend
they will have; it must be of service to
consider

consider by what methods we may be best prepared for them, and upheld under them, and how they may be improv'd so as to issue in our final advantage.

H E R E I N the antient Philosophers have offer'd their assistance, but many of the arguments which they have made use of have been too liable to exception, to have any great force upon the common people; whatever influence they might have upon themselves. And after all they have said, or cou'd say upon this subject; it will appear that divine revelation alone can fully reconcile us to the incumbrances of our present state. The account which it gives of the relation between God and us, of the glorious perfections which he displays in the government of the world, and the provision which he hath in a particular manner made for his faithful servants; tends to reconcile us to all our sufferings. Tho', in respect of his boundless power and dominion, he may afflict us according to his pleasure; yet as he is too happy to need our misery, so he is too wise and good to prescribe any methods of avoiding evil, and obtaining happiness, which have not a direct tendency to promote these ends.

T H E

THE author of this epistle is here arming the *Hebrews* against the bad effects of those sufferings which they lay under the weight of, or had just reason to fear were coming upon them. And one argument which he makes use of for this end, is the example of our blessed Saviour, *who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* He presseth them to consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest they shou'd be wearied, and faint in their way ¹.

ANOTHER argument of support under their afflictions is drawn from the necessity of them, according to the wise laws and rules of paternal government: *Whom the Lord loveth he chastens, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastning, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers; then are ye bastards, and not sons* ².

THE last motive of this kind, that I shall mention, is contain'd in this passage of scripture which is the subject of my present

¹ ver. 2, 3. ² ver. 6, 7, 8.

discourse ; where we are inform'd how much greater reason there is to submit to the corrections of our heavenly father, than to the chastisements of our earthly parents.

IN treating upon these words, I shall pursue the following method ;

I. *Inform you what sort of subjection or submission it is that we owe to our heavenly father, when he corrects us.*

II. *Consider the several arguments which are here made use of to enforce this duty upon us, and reconcile us to it.*

III. *Proceed to the practical improvement of the subject.*

I. *I shall inform you what sort of subjection or submission it is that we owe to our heavenly father, when he corrects us.*

I apprehend that subjection to God, in the proper sense of the word, denotes obedience to his declared will, and respects him as our legislator. But by subjection, in this place, I understand submission to his providential dealings, which considers him as our governor. Persons may be said to submit to the

the divine providence, when they bear all conditions and events with such apprehensions, dispositions, and outward deportment; as are suitable to the relation they stand in to God, and the circumstances they are placed in here. The duty which is here required of us, doth not suppose that we must be insensible of our afflictions, or that it is unlawful to desire or endeavour a freedom from them. A sense of evil is unavoidable, and so is the desire of deliverance from it. But then we must carefully avoid all murmurings and complaints against the governour of the world, all revengeful thoughts against the instruments of our sufferings, and all irregular courses, in order to extricate ourselves from our troubles.

P R E V I O U S to this submission, there must be a firm persuasion that nothing befalls us but by God's direction, or permission. That all events of providence, how contrary soever to our expectations or wishes, are perfectly consistent with the divine attributes. And there must also be a sense or apprehension of the relation we stand in to God, as our father. These three particulars being necessarily presuppos'd, in order to a due submission; I shall speak to them distinctly.

1. *There must be a firm persuasion that nothing befalls us but by God's direction, or permission.*

IF we are fully convinced that he hath the government of the world in his own hands, and is possess'd of those perfections which fully qualify him for it; we cannot well doubt of this. The notion which we have of providence, doth not only suppose the agency of the divine being; but that he acts without controul, *that there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against him. The Lord of hosts hath purposed* (saith the prophet) *and who shall disanul it? his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?* Without this supposition, our submission cannot be absolute and unlimited; for an absolute and unlimited submission is only owing to a being, who is superior to all other beings.

As to those afflictions which we suffer from men, and which their sins are the occasion of, tho' they cou'd not have happen'd without God's sufferance, yet it is not inconsistent with any of his perfections, to permit them to fall upon us; because it is not inconsistent with those perfections, to

[II]

permit creatures, who are endow'd with liberty, to use it, tho' they use it to bad purposes. Nor are we to think it strange, that the divine being is spoken of as the author of such evils as these, since he is frequently said to do things, in scripture, when he only suffers them to be done, and doth not restrain that power by which creatures do them. Since those afflictions therefore which we suffer, on account of the sins of others, cannot happen to us without God's permission, we are obliged to submit to them. And this may not improperly be call'd submission to God, since it is an act of homage done to him, who permits nothing but what is consistent with his own perfections, and the wise laws of government.

2. This submission supposeth an unfeign'd belief, that all events of providence, how contrary soever to our expectations or wishes, are fully consistent with the divine perfections.

THE exercise of power, without regard to the nature and fitness of things, wou'd be tyranny; and a submission to it, only the submission of slaves, who are under the strong influence of fear. Nor cou'd there be any sufficient foundation for a filial sub-

mission to God, on account of what we suffer from him; if our sufferings were inconsistent with his wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, &c. But it is manifest that his dealings with us, are not liable to any such imputation; for as our chastisements never exceed our sinful deserts, neither as to their kind, degree, or continuance, so they are calculated to answer very wise and good purposes, with respect to our selves, and others.

T H O' it is not the present design of providence in all things to proportion mens afflictions to their offences, yet whoever considers, as he ought, the number and aggravations of his own sins, and the near relation between them and misery; need not be surpriz'd at, and shou'd not be displeased with the supreme governor, on account of the calamities which befall him. *Shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?* Beside, it often happens that the punishments, which the children of men undergo, tread upon the heels of those transgressions which they have been guilty of, and appear; to be the natural and unavoidable consequence thereof. Whenever therefore this appears to be the case,

case, such offenders have abundant reason to suppress and stifle their complaints, *and accept the punishment of their iniquities.*

AND tho' many calamities, which good men suffer, are the consequence of, and seem to be inflicted upon them, by others, for their allegiance and loyalty to the supreme governour; yet the wise ends that are answer'd thereby, are a proof both of God's wisdom, and love, even to those who are the sufferers. These are means of exciting in them that faith and hope, that patience and trust, which they owe to their maker; and render them meet for the future enjoyment of him: *Ye are in heaviness (saith St. Peter) that the tryal of your faith may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ* ¹.

IF we consider matters in this view, we shall evidence our submission to the supreme being, by vindicating him in all his proceedings. But if we *fret against the Lord*, if we pretend to call him to account for what he doth, and *charge him foolishly*, as if we had suffer'd injuries at his hands; this will not be to behave as dutiful children towards a tender parent, who is cor-

¹ 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

recting them in wisdom and faithfulness; but as a rebellious offspring. It will not be to be subject to him, but to dispute his pleasure; and instead of acquitting him, to accuse his proceedings, and pass an unrighteous and insolent censure upon them.

3. *This submission doth also pre-suppose a sense or apprehension of the relation we stand in to God, as our father.*

THE submission here required, is that of children to their father, and as this is a more near and endearing relation than those of sovereigns and subjects, masters and servants; it calls for a greater degree of esteem, and reverence. This title of *father*, is applicable to God on more accounts than one. He is not only so, in as far as he hath produced us and brought us into being, but also on account of that spiritual life, which we receive from him; for *we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. This may probably be the chief reason, why the supreme being is here call'd *the father of spirits*; which expression will be consider'd hereafter. And we shall see a further foundation for this relation, if we consider that he hath adopted us into the number of his children, and given us

a title to a future everlasting inheritance. And it may be of service to us, if we would fully understand the nature of that submission of which I am speaking, to have an eye to these different acceptations of the word; because all of them tend to promote the duty which is here required. If he produced us out of nothing, if he hath restored us to his lost image, if by the influence of his spirit, the instructions of his word, and the discipline of his providence, he is preparing and making us meet for a state of endless happiness; we have the strongest inducements to submit to him.

HAVING shew'd you, in these particulars, what the submission spoken of in the Text supposeth; I now proceed to inform you what it includes in it. And these four things seem to be included, PATIENCE, RESIGNATION, REFORMATION, and TRUST.

THAT PATIENCE, of which I am now speaking, hath a respect to present evils, and signifies a quiet and cheerful suffering of all those afflictions, which our heavenly father shall think fit to lay upon us; without murmuring at them, or attempting a release from them by any unjustifiable

justifiable methods. Holy *Job* was so far master of himself, under that croud of evils which press'd upon him, as to cry out : *Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil ?* The devout Psalmist, when encompass'd around with calamities, was *dumb*, and open'd not his mouth, in any sinful complaints ; *because the Lord had done it* ². And the afflicted church of God was brought to this resolution : *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinn'd against him* ³. The like conduct will appear to be highly reasonable in ourselves, whatever light we consider matters in. If we are consider'd as men, who are *born to trouble* ; we shou'd be satisfy'd to bear the common burden of our natures. If we are look'd upon as patients, who stand in need of affliction ; we ought to submit to the medicine which is necessary to cure us. Or if we look upon our selves as offenders, we ought submissively to endure the punishment of our iniquities.

RESIGNATION is also included in the notion of submission. This is founded upon the supposition of our being God's property, and his having an absolute right

¹. *Job* ii. 10. ². *Psf.* xxxix. 9. ³. *Mic.* vii. 9.

to us; and indeed we are more his, than we are our own. As this consideration discovers the equity and reasonableness of devoting our selves wholly to him, so it shews with what safety and advantage we may do it; because he can not be unconcern'd about, or unmindful of what is his own. With this suggestion he encourag'd the faith and hope of his antient people—

*I have call'd thee by thy name, thou art mine; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*¹.

Resignation consists in submitting our wills to the divine will. And if this is the frame of our spirits, we shall not account any afflictions too grievous to be born, which

¹ *Isa. xliii. 1, 2.* These words, according to our Translators, refer to the future time; but they may as well be understood of the time past: and probably relate to the *Israelites* passage through the *Red-Sea*, and the river *Jordan*; and to the excessive heats which they underwent in their travails through the *Wilderness*. And this past experience of theirs, was a ground of dependence for time to come.

God sees fit to exercise us with. We shall not desire to have the management of our own affairs, or expect that he shou'd accommodate matters to our wish; because this wou'd be to act as if we were our own, in defiance of his right to dispose of us.

THIS submission also includes REFORMATION. God's rebukes are occasion'd by our faults, and the great end propos'd by those rebukes is our amendment; and unless they have this effect upon us, we cannot be said to submit to our heavenly father. This is what earthly parents have in view, when they chastise their offspring, to secure their obedience for time to come. They are not satisfied with verbal expressions of filial reverence, nor with promises of submission; unless their future lives prove the sincerity of those promises. Nor are we truly subject to the father of spirits, unless these faults, for which he corrects us, are amended. Reformation certainly shou'd be the consequence of affliction, and often is so: *If they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction, then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded; he openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from*

from iniquity ¹. Surely (saith Elihu) it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more ².

SUBMISSION also includes TRUST, by which I understand a pleasing expectation of the blessings we desire, and want; grounded upon a persuasion of the divine perfections. Good men have, at some critical seasons, been inclin'd to ask themselves; *Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever, doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* But this is the language of diffidence, and the trust, of which I am speaking, considers God in a much more amiable light, encourageth us to depend upon his help in all difficulties, and his gracious provision in all necessities. His unerring knowledg and wisdom assure us that he is acquainted with our most intricate affairs, and qualify'd to undertake the conduct of them. His irresistible power ought to set us beyond the fears of any successful opposition to his designs.

¹ Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10. ² Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

His goodness shews that he wants not inclination to help us. And his promises are the promises of one who cannot deny himself, nor *alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth*. These considerations therefore, added together, give us reason to expect a mitigation of our troubles, sufficient degrees of strength to support us under them, and a deliverance from them; when the end is obtain'd for which they were sent.

THE foregoing particulars may discover to us the nature of that submission which we owe to our heavenly father, when he corrects us; and the language of his heart who is under the proper influence thereof, will be this: "Gracious father, I am thine, "by the most unalienable right and title; "and thou hast a greater interest in me, "than I have in my self. I wou'd not "chuse my own lot and portion, because "I am not my own master, and at my own "disposal; but make it my request that "thou wou'dst chuse for me. What I am, "thou hast made me; and therefore thou "shalt dispose of my person. What I possess, thou hast committed to me in trust; "and if thou takest it away, thou only "recallest what was thy own. Whatever "place

“ place or rank in the world thou assignest
 “ to me, tho’ it is that of the meanest of
 “ thy dependents; I am content. I leave
 “ it entirely to thee to determine whether
 “ health or sickness, riches or poverty,
 “ honour or disgrace are fittest and best for
 “ me; whatever my outward circumstances
 “ happen to be, as they are of thy appoint-
 “ ment, or with thy permission; I will
 “ think them best my self, I will be thy
 “ advocate and vindicate thee with respect
 “ to the objections of others, and acknow-
 “ ledge thy paternal wisdom, and love in
 “ all. It is every way fitting that I shou’d
 “ be displeas’d with my self, on account of
 “ those sins which have displeased thee;
 “ and that I shou’d dismiss those enemies
 “ of my repose, which have caused thee to
 “ contend with me, and wou’d separate me
 “ from thee. I am determin’d therefore,
 “ by that assistance which thou hast gra-
 “ ciously offer’d, so to submit to thy disci-
 “ pline as to be subject to thy commands;
 “ and because I am prone to overlook
 “ my own defects, I offer my self to thy
 “ inspection, who art the *searcher of all*
 “ *hearts*, and desire that thou wou’dst
 “ *search me and know my heart, try me and*
 know

“ *know my thoughts, and see if there be any*
 “ *wicked way in me, and lead me in the way*
 “ *everlasting.* Thou hast every thing in
 “ thee which is a proper ground and
 “ foundation of my dependence and con-
 “ fidence, for time to come; I will there-
 “ fore chearfully cast my burthen upon
 “ thee, my rock and my salvation, depend-
 “ ing upon an adequate support under it,
 “ while it continues; and a joyful deliver-
 “ ance from it, at what time, and in what
 “ way thou shalt determine.

II. *I now proceed to the consideration of the
 several arguments, which are here made use
 of, to inforce this duty upon us, and reconcile
 us to it.*

THE arguments for submission to the
 divine being, which the Text makes men-
 tion of, are drawn either from the nearer
 relation which we stand in to him, than to
 our earthly parents, and the more absolute
 property he hath in us, by vertue of that
 relation—. Or from the greater duration
 and continuance of his authority over us,
 than that of the *fathers of our flesh* —. Or
 lastly, from the different manner in which
 we are chastised by one, and by the other.

1. *The first argument for our submission to the divine chastisements, is taken from the nearer relation which we stand in to the supreme being, than to our earthly parents; and the more absolute property he hath in us, by vertue of that relation.*

THEY are only fathers of our flesh, but he is the father of our spirits; and consequently the submission we owe to him is more entire and absolute. If by Father, we mean Creator (which is a very common Signification of the word) the title is only applicable to God, both as it respects our bodies, and souls. But others may not improperly (tho' in a lower sense) be call'd our fathers, since they have been employ'd by the great architect in giving us being, and made use of us as instruments in his hands.

GOD is in other places call'd the God of the spirits of all flesh ¹. And when the wise man is speaking of the dissolution of our present frame, he saith: *The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it* ². And no more seems to be intended by these expressions, than that he created the spirits of all men, and breathed

¹ Numb. xvi. 22. -- xxvii. 16. ² Eccles. xii. 7.
into

into them the breath of life. But this title (*the father of spirits*) seems to be ascrib'd to him, in the text, on a further account; in as far as he makes us partakers of a spiritual and divine nature; gives a title to, and prepares us for everlasting life: *Having begotten us again to a lively hope --- to an inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, and which fadeth not away, reserv'd in heaven for us* ¹.

It is here suppos'd that earthly parents have a right to correct their children, and that they are under an obligation of submitting to those corrections: *We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; i. e. we own'd their authority over us, and were excited, partly by a sense of shame on account of our past offences, and partly by the dread of their future displeasure, to avoid those faults, for time to come, which they corrected us for* ². This authority, on the one hand, and submission

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3. ² The word *ντρέπομαι* frequently signifies to be affected with shame, and is properly used of one who is so sham'd, as to seek where he may hide himself from publick view. It denotes that regard too, which we ought to shew to mankind, *Luke xviii. 2, 4.* as also a change or alteration as to the course of our actions.

mission, on the other, arise from the relation it self of which I am speaking. By the law of nature, those persons who are employ'd as instruments in giving others an existence, must be oblig'd to take care of them, and promote their welfare; but this cannot be done effectually, unless they have authority and power to direct and govern their actions, in order to their safety and advantage. If it appears therefore that correction is a necessary means in order to this end, it must be the duty of children to submit to it.

BUT the obligations to submit to our heavenly father are still more forcible, because his right to us, consider'd as our maker, is more full and absolute; he is the *father of our spirits* in particular, and hath an absolute claim to our supreme homage, exclusive of all others. Tho' we are under authority to our earthly parents, they are under authority to God, and ought to act no otherwise than in subordination to him; the power they claim is derived from him, and therefore if they wou'd oblige us to any thing that he

ons. And these several significations of the word, taken together, will shew the nature of that reverence which is here spoken of.

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prohibits,

prohibits, God is to be obey'd, and not man. We may be compel'd to submit to their rigorous chastisements, but we must never be subject to their unjust commands ; our hearts must be kept entire for God, and in every instance own and stoop to his superior government.

THE divine being is also the *father of our spirits*, in an eminent manner, as we are regenerated, and advanced to a new and more excellent life ; and this new relation, with the glorious privileges attending it, justly demand a proportionate respect : for that which increaseth the obligation, shou'd also increase the submission. In a word, his authority over us is founded in an absolute right to us, and therefore our submission to him ought to be absolute ; while that which we owe to others, must always be limited and restrain'd.

THE sum of the argument, from the particular under present consideration, is this : If filial reverence is owing to our earthly parents, and a submission to their chastisements, on account of the relation they stand in to us, and the authority they have over us ; our heavenly father, who is more intimately related to us, and hath a
more

more absolute authority over us, may justly claim a greater degree of submission from us, under his rebukes.

2. *We have greater reason to submit to the corrections of our heavenly father, than to those of our earthly parents; because of the longer duration or continuance of his authority over us.*

WHEN the author of this epistle saith: *We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence*, he manifestly speaks of the time past; and seems to intimate that the exercise of that authority was then at an end, and consequently the submission required by it. But this matter is more plainly hinted to us by what follows, where speaking of earthly parents, he adds: *They verily for a few days chasten'd us*. Indeed the whole term of a man's life is sometimes spoken of in this diminutive manner, when the great uncertainty of it is mention'd, or when it is compar'd with eternity. But the design of the holy penman seems to be this, to signify that there is a time when the authority of earthly parents, with respect to their offspring, doth in a great measure cease.

IN the first stage of life, when children are wholly incapable of governing themselves, their actions ought to be regulated by those who stand in the nearest relation to them; and to whose care God hath in an especial manner committed them. When they are grown up to such a degree of knowledge and understanding, as to be capable of self government; yet as long as they are parts of their parents family, those parents may, as heads of that family, lawfully exercise authority over them. But when children by their parents consent, have enter'd upon a separate management of their own concerns; they are releas'd from many former instances of submission: tho' they will always owe to them a great degree of honour and reverence.

BUT the case is quite otherwise with respect to our heavenly father. As long as we continue in this present world, we are to be consider'd as under age, we can never be free from his authority and government, nor act as lords over our selves; and consequently there is no part of life wherein we can be excus'd, and exempted from the submission which he requires. The authority of our natural parents is most absolute

at

at first, because then we are most incapable of governing our selves; but it declines by degrees in proportion as we grow up in years, and knowledge; till at last it dwindles away as to several particulars, and is in a manner resign'd and given up, as a trust committed to them only for a time. And the reason of this is very manifest, because there is a time when children become masters of themselves, and are as capable of managing and directing their own affairs, as their parents are. But every one will see that the parallel doth not hold between *the father of our spirits*, and the *fathers of our flesh*. We can never be so capable of chusing for ourselves, and conducting our affairs, as an all-wise God is; and there will always be an infinitely greater difference between him and the wisest of the sons of men, than between any parents and their offspring.

As it appear'd therefore, by the former particular, that our submission to God must be absolute, because his authority over us is so; it appears, by this, that it ought to be of continuance, and subject to no declension, and abatement: since there is no portion of life wherein we are not subject to his paternal government.

3. *The last argument for submission to divine chastisements, is taken from the different manner in which we are corrected by God, and man.*

They chasten us after their pleasure, but be for our profit; that we may be partakers of his holiness, and live. The MOTIVES of action are very different in one, and the other. All correction ought to proceed from love to the person, and hatred to the crime, and be proportion'd to the fault which hath been committed; when any therefore chastise their children for that which is not blame worthy, or in a degree beyond the demerits of the crime, or to gratify their ungovern'd passions; they may be said to do it *after their pleasure*, or according to the present humour they are in, without regard to right or wrong. We too often find that the displeasure which earthly parents discover, is owing to their ignorance, rashness, or peevishness; they misinterpret the actions of their children, correct them for those things that are not criminal, and by that means totally confound their notions of right and wrong; they give birth to their own resentments, and carry them to a considerable height, before they have enquired whether there is any sufficient foundation
for

for them. In a word, they are influenced by their own unruly passions, and when they have once begun to contend, they persevere without measure; and at last perhaps become wholly implacable.

BUT God's love to his children, is that which moves him to contend with them: *Whom he loves he corrects, even as a father the son in whom he delights.* He doth not act with an arbitrary severity towards us, but according to the rules of wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and moderation. The punishments he inflicts are suited (as to their kind, degree, and duration,) to the circumstances of our case. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;* as if he cou'd take any pleasure in the pains which they feel: *If need be they are in heaviness,* and not otherwise, and we are assured *he will not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever.*

As the motives of action are different, so are the DESIGNS which are to be answer'd, by those chastisements that are inflicted by God, and by man. The end or design which earthly parents have in view, when they exercise this branch of their authority, is not always just, and good: or tho' the end intended and aim'd at is commendable,

mendable, yet the means that they put their children upon the use of, in order to attain that end, may be sinful; and in both these cases correction must be very irksome and provoking. Tho' some persons have a steady regard to the everlasting welfare of their offspring, yet the principal design of the greatest number, and the only design of too many; is to promote their present interest, and place them in what they account an advantageous situation in this world.

BUT the author of every good and perfect gift is constantly affording such unsuspected evidences of his paternal concern, as cannot leave us in suspense whether he intends our advantage, or not. It must necessarily be our profit, and not his own that he proposeth; nor can infinite wisdom hesitate, or be at a loss to fix upon the most effectual means in order hereto.

THE principal advantages which the divine corrections are design'd, and have a tendency to promote, are mention'd, first, more generally: *He chastens us for our profit.* And afterward, more particularly: *That we may be partakers of his holiness, and live;* or in other words, that we may be holy at present, and happy in the final issue of things.

Others

Others may lay us under constraints as to our external conduct; but he influenceth our spirits, and commands our hearts: *By this our iniquities are purg'd, and this is the salutary effect of correction, to take away sin.* They may entail earthly possessions upon us, but it is he alone who can convey to us a heavenly inheritance; and sure it should be accounted a very great privilege to *endure temptation, (i. e. afflictions design'd for our tryal) if when we are sufficiently try'd, we shall receive a crown of life.*

IN speaking of the different manner in which we are chastised by God, and man; we may also consider both the **KIND**, and **DEGREE** of correction. Some parents contend perpetually, and make severe remarks upon every little error and miscarriage, and by that means render themselves objects of dread, and aversion; so as to forbid their childrens affection, and lose their own authority, at the same time. Many do not distinguish as they shou'd between greater and less offences, but discover the same degree of resentment to all; and the usual consequence of such a conduct, is that their dependents have as great a dread of the smallest miscarriages, as of the most

aggravated: because they expect to suffer alike for both. Others, when they see fit to contend, do it with a blameable rigour, and in such a manner as too plainly discovers that they are indulging their own passions; which instead of reclaiming the disobedient, renders them obdurate, and kindles in them the sparks of revenge.

BUT he who made man, knows what is in man, hath a perfect knowledge of his frame, and understands the properest methods, and fittest seasons of access. Tho' we are continually offending him, yet he is not always contending with us; we are encourag'd by his smiles, as well as awed by his threatnings: and it is then only that he chastens us, when our interest manifestly requires it, and his faithfulness obligeth him to it. When he visits us with his rebukes, the degrees of affliction are not greater than the degrees of our offences; and if a less affliction works kindly upon us, and makes us tractable, he willingly lays aside his rod. As to those inflictions which carry in them the greatest appearance of severity, they are less than we deserve, and no more than are necessary to secure that submission which is the end and design thereof.

HAVING

HAVING endeavour'd to shew you what sort of submission it is that we owe to our heavenly father, and to present to you those arguments in a proper light, which are made use of to enforce this duty upon us, and reconcile us to it;

III. *I proceed to the practical improvement of the Subject.*

AND here I shall apply both to those who are not sufficiently affected with the evils of the present life, and also to such as are inclin'd to magnify the burdens to which they are subject; and then give you an account of such encouragements as are afforded to good persons, under all the difficulties which they meet with.

I. *Do not support yourselves with vain hopes of living exempt from such afflictions, as mankind are commonly liable to.*

If present experience doth not convince you, future experience may, and probably will, that *mankind are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* You are partakers of the same nature, and placed in the like situation with others; and this shou'd teach you to expect, and make provision for what ever may probably befall creatures, in such a station. No man's condition here

is establish'd and of long continuance, the like calamities which have befall'n others, may become your portion in a little time; what is their lot one day, may be yours the next. You are very much strangers to the world you live in, and to your selves, if you are not aware that innumerable evils tread upon your heels, surround you at all times, and in every place; so that it is much more surprizing they did not overtake you sooner, than that you escaped them so long.

THERE is scarce any thing in which mankind discover their folly more, than promising themselves a long and uninterrupted train of pleasing occurrences, and placing the evil day out of sight. It may reasonably be imagin'd that things will frequently fall out contrary to their expectations, and when this is the case, they are in danger of being shock'd and confounded at the approach of tryals, merely because they were unexpected. But the case is quite otherwise with those who have made themselves familiar with afflictions, while at a distance. The foresight and expectation of wise and considerate men, in regard to those afflictions which may probably happen, will
have

have much the same effect as the smart arising from present troubles hath upon others; it will rouse, and stir them up to action. They look with close attention upon sickness and poverty, injuries and disgrace, before they come; and this puts them into a posture of defence, and greatly weakens the power thereof¹.

2. *Do not create to yourselves imaginary troubles, and render life more irksome than you need to do.*

As some men scarce think of afflictions at all, till they come upon them; so others are subtle at inventing, and perpetuating them; as if the unavoidable burdens of the present life were not a sufficient exercise of their faith, and patience. Unless we are very attentive to the conduct of particular persons, it will not be easy to conceive how great a proportion of their afflictions are owing to their own folly. The present burden of life, consider'd in itself, and balanced with those supports which are at hand; is not so considerable, as that which ariseth from sorrowful reflections upon what

¹ *Præmeditati mali mollis ictus venit. Quicquid expectatum est diu, levius accedit. Sen.*

is past, and fearful expectations of what may come. Mens memories are made use of to torment them with the sense of former evils, and their fears predict terrible things for the future; they have frightful images always in view, some of which are pursuing, and others meeting them; so that the mind is continually tortured and distracted, between one and the other.

THIS anxious thought or solicitude, is what *Christ* cautions *his disciples* against, *Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*¹. Which words contain a plain prohibition of those cares that are more proper for the future, than the present time. There is ordinarily no part of life so free from trouble, but that it affords sufficient employment; and therefore you shou'd not make an addition to your present troubles, by foreboding and anticipating those which are at a distance. Do not, to day, take upon yourselves those afflictions which belong to any future time; because a day's sense of suffering is sufficient for one day's evil or burden.

¹ *Math.* vi. 34.

It may also be of service to consider that those afflictions, which are of your own seeking, do not admit of so easy a cure as others do. Such as are your ordinary lot, the common parent of mankind hath made suitable provision for; those which you are not able to foresee, or cannot prevent, that are undeservedly laid upon you by others, or he sees proper to inflict himself; you may apply to him under, with expectation of relief. But the case is otherwise, both with respect to those evils which are only imaginary, and such real troubles as you have manifestly brought upon yourselves. The same distemper of mind which caus'd those grievances, that have no real foundation, will prevent a cure; and you have much less reason to expect that the supreme being should deliver you from those complaints, which were matter of your own choice, than from such as were unavoidable.

3. *Let us learn in a decent and becoming manner to bear the burdens, which are laid upon us.*

WHEN we are placed in circumstances different from what we were in before, we have a new part to act; and are therefore carefully to consider what deportment wou'd become us, upon such a change.

Under

Under a state of affliction the divine oracles inform us that *we shou'd neither despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when he rebukes*¹. And if we are careful to avoid these extremes, our conduct will be suitable to our condition.

WE may be said to *despise the chastening of the Lord*, when we set light by it, grow insensible of it, and incorrigible under it. This was the complaint against Judah: *In vain have I smitten your children, they received no correction*². On the contrary we are oblig'd to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God*, and it was the resolution of his antient people to *bear the indignation of the Lord, because they had sin'd against him*³.

WE may be said to *faint under the divine rebukes*, when our faith, and hope in God, and our love to him suffer declensions, on account of his chastisements; and especially when we retreat and draw back from our vow'd allegiance⁴. This is ut-

¹ Heb. xii. 5. ² Jer. ii. 30. ³ Mich. vii. 9.

⁴ The word *ἠλύνω*, which we translate *to faint*, signifies to retreat or draw back as cowards do in a time of war, when press'd with dangers; and is oppos'd to perseverance. Gal. vi. 9.

terly inconsistent with the obligations we are under, *to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.*

I SHALL now offer some considerations which, if duly attended to, will help to reconcile us to our afflictions. If we do but impartially weigh matters, we shall be convinced that we frequently stand in need of this sort of discipline. The gentle arts of persuasion, and the allurements of kindness may operate well upon those who are of a tractable disposition; but in head-strong and obstinate tempers, the mild admonitions of God's word, and the endearing methods of his providence seldom have the desired effect. The malignant nature of their distemper is such, that no methods but those of severity are like to effect their cure; this was the case of the prodigal in the parable, who had no thoughts of returning to his father, and owning his authority, till extreme necessity drove him to it. And if our behaviour, towards the supreme being, is such as to render tryals of this nature necessary, in order to our reformation; nothing can be more reasonable than our submission under them.

IT ought to be a great support under the burdens we feel, to consider that a being of all perfections hath the direction of our affairs. If we did but believe, as we ought, that the world is govern'd by such a being, and that he overlooks and orders the concerns of mankind; we shou'd conclude that all matters are manag'd for us in a better manner, than they cou'd be if we had the only care thereof: and this wou'd at once silence our complaints, suppress our fears, and reconcile us to all events, how afflictive soever.

LET it be further consider'd, that tho' the present smart, which accompanies affliction, may for a time conceal from us the benefit of it; yet there are many advantages arising from thence, which will in time discover themselves. This is frequently made use of as a curb to hold in daring offenders, and restrain the bold efforts of their lawless lusts, and passions. By this men become acquainted with themselves, establish'd in their good resolutions, enabled to overcome the world, and also to maintain, and improve their conquest over it, when obtain'd. Even good persons find too great an inclination to grow impatient and peevish, under the smart of God's rod; but when
they

they recover from their disorder, and see the natural tendency of such penal evils as have overtaken them; they will be ready to acknowledge it was good for them that they were afflicted.

THO' we groan under the burden of affliction, yet *nothing has happen'd to us but what is common to men*; our case is far from being singular, we have many examples before us of persons who have been exercis'd in the like manner, and came off with reputation and glory. The *Psalmist* assures us, in his time, that *many were the afflictions of the righteous*. And the disciples of Christ are warn'd that *thro' much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of heaven*. The apostle *Paul*, speaking of himself and other Christians, saith: *We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men—even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place—being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defam'd, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things, to this day*¹. Such were their

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 9, 11, 12, 13.

sufferings, and yet these were accounted by them but light and momentary; and some, *tho' they were tortured, accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.* But that which shou'd afford the greatest encouragement, and excite in us a holy ambition to bear our afflictions with patience, and resignation; is the example of the *author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endur'd the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God.* Let us therefore consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary'd, and faint in our way ¹.

IF we are true to God, and faithful to ourselves, we have greater supports under present troubles, and a fuller enjoyment of the good things we possess, than others can pretend to. One wou'd imagine that those, whose views are confin'd to this world, and who have nothing good to expect or hope for beyond it; shou'd take the most likely methods of enjoying all the satisfaction which it is capable of affording, and of moderating all its afflictions. But this is

¹ Heb. xii. 2, 3.

so far from being the case, that they neither understand how to bear the want and absence of what they desire, to endure the loss of what they at present enjoy, nor to use their possessions with that moderation and reserve, which alone can make them a blessing to them. Different passions and appetites divide, and hurry them different ways. They have a greater eagerness of desire to the present world, than others; and yet none are less capable of satisfying such a desire, than themselves. They are render'd liable to perpetual disappointments, by the abuse of their comforts, but they are unable to bear those disappointments, when they come. On the other hand, those who are under the influence of a divine principle, know how to enjoy what they possess, and to want what their heavenly father doth not think proper for them; and therefore have arguments sufficient to make the burden of life tolerable, and the thoughts of death comfortable. Their minds are freed from many fruitless cares and fears, which distract others; by which means they become more fit for the chearful discharge of every duty.

To what hath been said, I shall only add the consideration of the glorious issue which our afflictions, duly improv'd, will have. Tho' we are strangers and pilgrims here, yet we look upon our selves as heirs of a glorious inheritance hereafter; and therefore shou'd not lay a great stress upon the entertainment we meet with in our way to the promised possession: especially when we consider of how short a continuance all our present troubles shall be, and what will be the consequence of them. In a short space of time our warfare shall be accomplish'd, we shall *rest from our labours, and our works follow us*. Tho' the wants which we find ourselves subject to in this present world, will afford some cause of anxiety and complaint; yet they will be but of short continuance: *The needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever*. We may now weep and lament on various accounts, but when a few years, a few months, or days have passed over us; *our sorrow shall be turned into joy, and our joy no man shall take from us*. In a word, *our present light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for*

us

*us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory*¹; which will fully compensate for the difficulties we pass through to it.

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

F I N I S.



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